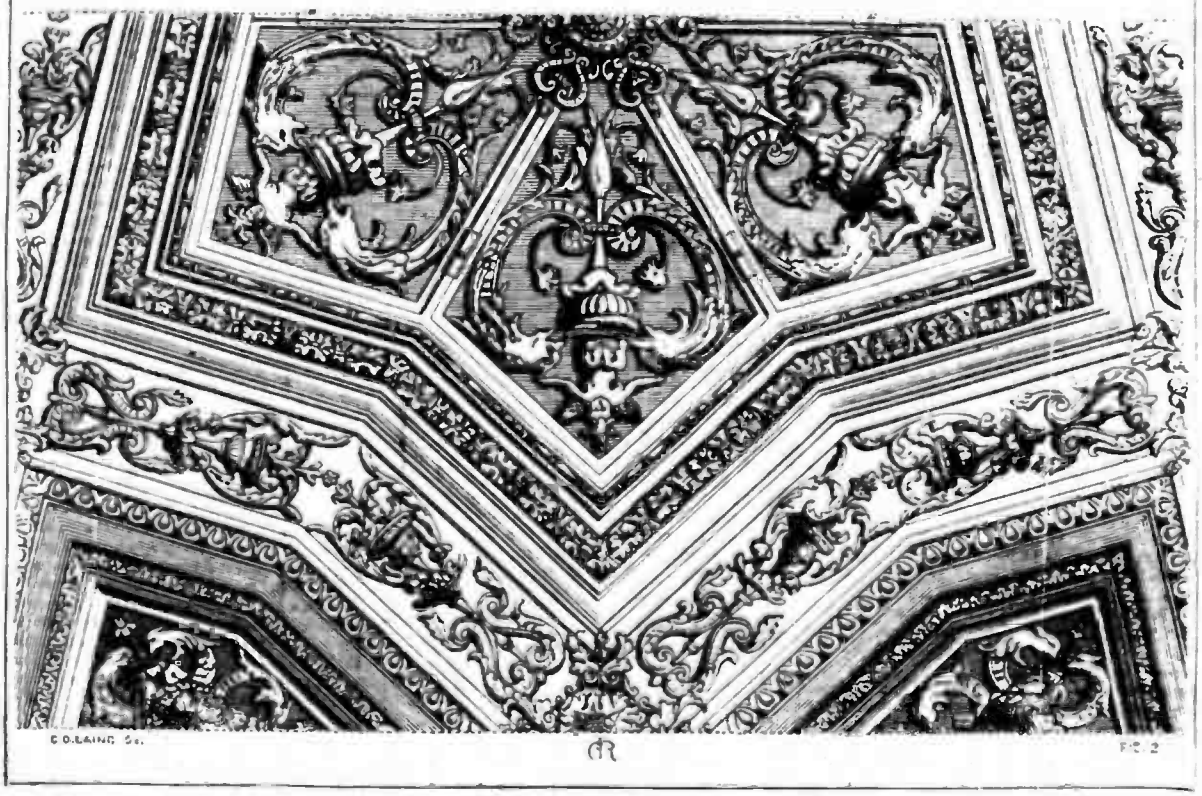
CEILING.—PALAIS DE JUSTICE, AT ROUEN.



CEILING OF THE SALLE DES ASSISES,
IN THE PALAIS DE JUSTICE, AT ROUEN.

For the sketches from which the drawings engraved for our pages were made, we are indebted to Mr. A. Poynter, who kindly lent them for the purpose, and favoured us with the following particulars:—

"The Salle des Assises in the Palais de Justice, at Rouen, is in

Length..	25·85 metres:	about 84 ft. 6½ in.	English.
Breadth..	13·35 ,,	,, 43 ft. 8 in.	,,
Height ..	6·60 ,,	,, 21 ft. 7 in.	,,

The ceiling of this hall, carved in wood and gilt, contains thirty principal panels of a stellar form.

Each stile dividing the compartment of the star is mortised at *a*, fig. 1. From these points originally started very long pendants, richly ornamented and gilt, but they were removed about forty years since, and not the slightest remains could be found of them, although diligent search was made, as long ago as the time when the late Mr. Pugin was preparing his work on the architectural antiquities of Normandy.

In the present condition of this elaborate ceiling, the effect of the projection of the large panels from the general face is disagreeable, and produces an air of great heaviness. It must, however, be borne in mind with reference to this peculiarity of composition, that the protruding moulding formed the springing of the pendants. But the low proportion of the room must always have been a defect, even more apparent when the parts were unmutilated, and approached nearer to the eye."

The late Mr. Pugin, in his volume referred to, mentions that the room now used as the Salle des Assises, was the one in which the parliament, or the three estates, constituting the Duchy of Normandy, viz., the deputies of the church, the nobility, and the good towns, held their meetings. He describes the ceiling as being of oak, nearly as black as ebony, covered with a profusion of carving and gilt ornaments.

With regard to the long pendants, said to have been attached to the great panels, and which have been removed probably fifty years; and to the bad effect of them pointed out by Mr. Poynter, it may be suggested that a small open scroll ornament might have been attached to each style of the panel, and that they never had long pendants; examples of the former can be pointed out in ceilings of about the same date in this country, and the effect is extremely rich.

This ceiling is ascribed to the commencement of the 16th century.

Fig. 1.—Plan of a compartment of the ceiling.
Fig. 2.—Portions of the two panels at large.
Fig. 3.—Section of mouldings of the two panels to a larger scale.
Fig. 4.—Pendant ornament in centre of small panels.

BELGIAN ART AND BELGIAN GOVERNMENT.

It was only last year that H. M. King Leopold, introduced *art* even in his speech from the throne, in the following words:—"The exhibition of fine arts has preserved the Belgian school in that degree of consideration, which has been assigned to it by the admiration of the nation, and the justice of our neighbours." Thus art had been made (perhaps for the first time) a national affair, one worthy to be accounted for to the representatives of the realm. In the same way the annual exhibition of fine arts is styled,—"Exposition *nationale* des beaux arts," and the offices of the Secretary of State for the Home Department, at Brussels, contain, in the first story, the Section of national industry, in the third that of public instruction—between both appears the inscription, *Beaux arts*. Thus the Belgian Government protect art as a valuable *common-good* of the nation; public buildings are numerous and splendid, and adorned with sculpture and paintings. The king encourages the *national* element in every way, and a great number of art academies and schools of design are scattered over the land. With him vie the corporations of cities, and the clerical authorities. The former contribute large sums, from their communial revenues, towards the establishment of art schools, and purchase art-works for their town-halls; the clergy strive hard to obliterate those ravages and spoliations, which the madness of the first Reformation had committed. Very numerous are, moreover, private collections, and have become a nearly necessary appurtenance of every competent family residence. Each large city has yearly exhibitions, and other societies of encouragement, which exhibit every six months; but the chief is the yearly *national exhibition*, which is held alternately in Brussels, Ghent, and Antwerp.

The State's encouragements for artists are numerous, as the granting of the order of Leopold, and the many gold and silver medals awarded at each exhibition. The concourses at the two larger academies award *travelling pensions* to deserving pupils. Belgium has now *forty-three* schools and academies for painting, design, and architecture!—the number of students being between 6 and 7,000—an astonishing proportion for a population of only four millions. This ought to suffice to disprove the belief, that *industrial tendencies* will encroach on the higher mind of the people, or destroy the sense for the *beautiful*. It is now for the third time in modern history, that Belgium has shone forth as a pattern and beacon of art. Thus, in 1430, Johann von Eyck stood at the head of European art; in 1630, Rubens; and it was again in 1830, that a seasonable political revolution brought on another regeneration of Belgian art.

COMPO *versus* STONE.
ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, BRISTOL.

Sir,—You will be pleased to hear that your notice of the restoration of St. James's Church has excited attention in the local papers, also in the committee.

I trust you will allow me to say a few words, as the architect responsible for the safety of the building and for the amount of expenditure to be laid out. The columns are, I believe, safe if untouched; but they are built of rubble, and cased with freestone. The rubble is decayed, and the freestone is much hacked, and any attempt to piece the columns will occasion necessity for their entire reconstruction. They are five or six inches out of perpendicular, one or two ways, as also the

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